FROM FARM EXCHANGES

Cultivation of Corn.

We need not repeat what we have said so often heretofore, that the time to kill weeds is not when they have taken possession of the soil, but in the very beginning of their existence. The time to kill weeds is when they first put their leaves above ground. Then, with the proper instruments, they can be killed by the millions. Therefore the most efficient instrument for killing weeds in the earlier stages of the growth of the corn plant is the harrow and the weeder, which not only do the business most effectively right among the corn and without injury to it, when properly handled, but also aid other objects for which cultivation is intended. Where, however, there are deep rooted weeds, such as the pestiferous morning-glory or cocklebur, or where weeds have been allowed to strike their roots deep into the ground, the cultivation must be as deep as the roots, whether it injures the corn plant or not. In that case it is simply a choice between two evils; and the evil of weeds is so much greater than that of moderate laceration of the corn roots that they must be exterminated at all hazards. The earlier this can be done in the corn cultivating season the better. Deep cultivation is therefore entirely proper on foul ground or an improperly prepared seed bed until the corn is from a foot to eighteen inches high and spreads its thick network of roots through the entire soil, which is well supplied with moisture.

Farmers must not forget that the plant food of the soil is being prepared while the corn is growing; that is, the plant food which exists in an unavailable form is prepared quite rapidly by the cultivation which the corn receives. The corn plant and all other plants feed, so to speak, on food previously digested by the microbic life with which every fertile soil teems. A soil without microbes is as barren as a granite rock, no matter how much fertility there may be in it as shown by chemical analysis. It is the function of these germs or microbes in the soil to digest the mineral and vegetable matter and allow it to be put in solution, making it available for use as plant food. Cultivation hastens this process, and therefore it is not merely to kill weeds that we cultivate corn, but to develop plant food.

This is most strongly illustrated in the sugar beet country, for sugar is not manufactured in the factory, but on the farm; and the farmer who fails to keep everlastingly cultivating his sugar beets is the man who will draw small checks when the factory makes up its books. What is true of the sugar beet is true of everything else. A thoroughly cultivated corn field produces not merely more corn, but better corn, with more starch in it, more gluten, more oil, more of everything that makes it valuable as a food for man and beast.

The control of the water content of the soil must not be overlooked. Farmers have been disposed to smile when we have talked about conserving the moisture of the soil for the last two years, but they should remember that the object of cultivation is not merely to conserve moisture, but to control it, to get rid of it in times of surplus moisture, and to conserve it in times when moisture is deficient. Shallow cultivation, under proper conditions, paradoxical as it may seem, serves both ends.

It is the field upon which no crust is allowed to form that will hold the most moisture in a dry time. It is the well cultivated field that will dry out the quickest on the surface, provided the ground is in proper condition. In other words, the encrusted field loses water very rapidly, because it is drawn up from below and passes out in a continuous current to the air. When the crust is broken up the surface for an inch or two is dried out, while the moisture below is conserved and held for future use. The crust must be broken up at all hazards, because only by the breaking up of this crust can plants have that amount of atmospheric supply to which they are entitled.

Some farmers are disposed to cultivate corn as tradition has taught them. They think corn must be plowed three times, and that three times is enough. Other men think that it is all right to plow corn till the fourth of July, but apparently think it is all wrong after that. There can be no rule given as to the number of times corn should be cultivated. That depends on the previous preparation of the seed bed, on the rainfall, on the amount of labor at the disposal of the farmer. There is no danger of cultivating too much; there is a great deal of danger in cultivating too little. Neither can any time be set as to when cultivation should cease. That again depends on circumstances of which the farmer is the best judge.

It is the farmer who keeps his land in good heart by rotation of crops, by the growing of clover, by the application of manure, who prepares his seed bed with the greatest care, who gets the best kind of seed, tests it and drops it accurately, and who follows this up with the most thorough cultivation during the latter days of May, through June and the first days of July, that grows the biggest crops, has the best corn, and makes the most money.

What tool he should use depends altogether on circumstances. There are times when to harrow corn is a mark of the highest wisdom; there are other times when it is a mark of folly. For example, when the ground is wet and the day cloudy, and when he has nothing better to use than a large, heavy, straight-toothed harrow. There are times when the weeder is worth two or three plows; there are times and circumstances when the weeder had best be left at home. There are times when deep plowing is imperative; there are other times when it is all folly. What a farmer needs is to know what he wants to do, the end he wants to accomplish, and then to use the means at hand best adapted to accomplish these ends.

Remember one thing, however, that the man who prepares his seed bed, plants his corn, and then neglects to cultivate it, is a good deal like the fellow about whom Solomon once remarked: "A slothful man roastest not that which he taketh in hunting."—Wallace's Farmer.

Bright Yellow Tobacco.

The last number of the United States Department of Agriculture Crop Reporter (just out) comments as follows on the crop outlook in the Bright Tobacco Belt:

The Virginia Bright Belt reports a decrease of 5 to 10 per cent from the acreage of last year, due in a large measure to the lack of sufficient farm labor to set out the crop. Plants are plentiful except in a few localities, but the season is a week or ten days late and little transplanting had been done up to June 1.

The Old Bright Belt of North Carolina reports the acreage practically the same as that planted last year. The season for transplanting has been late, and plants are small, but sufficient for a full crop. In some counties 75 per cent of the crop has been set out and transplanting is progressing favorably throughout this section.

The New Belt in the eastern part of North Carolina presents a sharp contrast as compared with the Old Belt. Reports indicate a marked reduction in acreage, the estimates varying from 25 to 60 per cent less than was planted in these counties last year. Weather conditions have been unfavorable, plants are small and in many localities very scarce. The low price received for the crop last year, the present high price of cotton and the scarcity of labor have caused the decrease.

When sending your renewal be sure to give exactly the name on label and postoffice to which the copy of paper you receive is sent.

$1,500,000 for North Carolina Strawberries and $5,000,000 for Georgia Peaches.

The strawberry crop of North Carolina has been gathered and the railroads report the shipment of twenty-four hundred car-loads. The berries were bought and paid for at the fields and brought to the producers more than six hundred dollars per car, more than a million and a half dollars. It is only within the past four years that much attention has been paid, in the South, to the culture of strawberries, and these figures, given by authority, show how greatly the wealth of this section can be increased. This money is at home—to stay, and with the cotton, peach and melon crops will bring millions to the South. Georgia's peach crop is estimated, for 1904, at five million dollars.—Augusta Chronicle.

Take Care of Small Grain.

Farmers have been known to make a fair crop of wheat and then get too busy to haul it to the barn or stack it as soon as dry enough. If wheat is quite ripe when cut, three or four days of clear weather will dry it enough to stack or pack away under shelter. Then it will be safe. When cut wheat should be well shocked. Even then two or three days of warm showery weather will cause the outside heads to sprout. If that should be the case just let it alone. There is no use to tear it down, unless you are sure no more rain will fall for several days. The sprouting of outside heads does not injure wheat, for the thrasher and fan will carry off with the chaff all such grains. It is the poorest management possible to let a good crop spoil after it is made. Treat oats the same way. Just as soon as they are dry enough haul them up to the barn. It is better to have all your oats threshed and feed them by measure or weight. Then there will be no waste. Every farmer who raises one hundred to three hundred bushels of small grain should have a good fan mill. Even if wheat is dry when thrashed it should be run through the fan mill two or three weeks afterwards.—Cotton Plant.

Last Week's North Carolina Crop Bulletin.

Cotton is everywhere in excellent condition; it is being worked the second time and chopping is nearly over. Corn is plowed the second time; it is doing fairly well and promises to be a good crop. Wheat is ripening rapidly. Harvesting will probably begin next week in the Western part of the State; while in the Eastern counties it is already in progress. The yield is everywhere good, and is much better than was expected; the straw is short, has a good color and is well headed. Oats are doing well, but the crop is not very promising. Irish potatoes are being dug and marketed in the eastern part of the State; the yield is below the average. Prospects for fruit are fair. Apples are dropping in some places. Dewberries are being picked and some are on the market.

Need of Better Roads.

We are made glad by every achievement of modern progress which adds something else good to country life. The country is the place to live, the place to raise people. God made it—made it rich and broad, open, free, and sunny. There the hills are kissed by the sunlight, the valleys sweetened with dew, the fields are fair with flowers; farm, orchard, and pasture are opulent with gifts of plenty, and over them all sweeps the fresh clean air of heaven. But there seemed to us on this trip one thing needful—good roads. Just think of the blessings to this already blest section which would be added by a properly located and properly graded system of macadam roads! The farms need these roads five times, ten times, fifty times more than the towns need them. Gaston County is able to build macadam roads, and will build them as soon as the farmers say the word. Wonder what they are waiting for?—Gastonia Gazette.